

KANSAS CITY STAR

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# No more delay on the EPA report that condemns secondhand smoke

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Environmental Protection Agency will release a long-delayed report that says secondhand cigarette smoke is a human carcinogen and kills about 3,000 non-smokers a year because of lung cancer, agency officials said Tuesday.

The report, to be released Thursday, also concludes that secondhand smoke increases the risk of pneumonia and bronchitis in children.

The release of the report, after more than two years of revisions, could bring an avalanche of federal, state and local regulations limiting smoking in public places, health advocates said.

"Having the EPA's imprimatur on this is extremely important," said Alfred Munzer, a physician who is a spokesman for the Coalition on Smoking or Health. The organization includes the American Lung Association, the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society.

"We believe this will motivate state governments, local governments to enact further regulations limiting smoking in public places," Munzer said.

The report also could prod the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to regulate smoking in the workplace, health advocates said. Douglas Fuller, an OSHA spokesman, said the agency would weigh the EPA report carefully in its deliberations.

Munzer called on President Bush to use the report to justify an order to restrict smoking in federal buildings.

"This is far less controversial

than the pardons he has issued and (restrictions) would do a tremendous amount for the public health," Munzer said.

The report concludes that secondhand smoke is a proven human carcinogen, putting it in the same class as asbestos, benzene and radon, EPA officials

said.

The report's authors determined that cigarette smoke causes about 3,000 lung cancer deaths a year among non-smokers and that it increases the risk of pneumonia, bronchitis, and middle-ear disorders in children. The report also concludes that cigarette smoke

increases the severity and frequency of asthma in children, EPA officials said.

The EPA has decided to kill a second report linking secondhand smoke to 37,000 heart disease deaths a year, said Robert Axelrad, head of the EPA's indoor-air division. The report originally was planned as a companion to the lung cancer report.

The link between cigarette smoke and heart disease is considered even more explosive than the lung cancer link, because cigarette smoke causes roughly 10 times as many heart disease as lung cancer deaths.

The heart association has petitioned the EPA to do its own study of secondhand smoke and heart disease, but the agency has not responded.

"We have not made a decision to do so at this time," Axelrad said.

The lung cancer report was the focus of an intensive lobbying campaign by the tobacco industry and its allies in Congress, who submitted hundreds of pages of documents to the EPA in the last two years in an effort to delay or water down the report.

Despite the attack, the EPA refused to back away from its condemnation of tobacco smoke as a human carcinogen and a dangerous indoor air pollutant, said EPA officials who worked on the report.

Brennan Dawson, a spokeswoman for the Tobacco Institute, said that despite the report's revisions, its conclusions still were not supported by existing scientific data.

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**— Alfred Munzer, a spokesman  
for the Coalition on Smoking or Health**

## SECONDHAND SMOKE

The EPA report concludes that secondhand smoke is a proven human carcinogen, putting it in the same class as asbestos, benzene and radon.

### Problems and numbers:

- Young children, especially those 18 months old or younger, face a substantial health risk if exposed to secondhand smoke.
- Increases the risk of pneumonia and bronchitis in children.
- Secondhand cigarette smoke causes about 3,000 lung cancer deaths a year among non-smokers.
- Smoke causes between 150,000 and 300,000 serious respiratory ailments.
- Exacerbates asthmatic symptoms in children.

Source: Environmental Protection Agency



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